

Powell pipeline could include hydropower

By **Nancy Perkins**

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ST. GEORGE — The Utah Board of Water Resources is seeking a federal permit for generating hydroelectric power from the controversial proposed \$500 million Lake Powell Pipeline project.

The state agency filed the application on Nov. 2 with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The application describes three hydroelectric developments that could be constructed in tandem with the proposed 135-mile pipeline slated to bring water from Lake Powell to Sand Hollow Reservoir in Washington County. Kane County and Iron County water users also have an interest in the pipeline project.

"We filed this preliminary permit application because we thought it would be a prudent business move," said Eric Millis, deputy director of the Utah Division of Water Resources. "We are protecting our rights to develop the hydropower of our own (pipeline) project."

The proposed pipeline could include three hydropower developments with the potential to produce 330 megawatts of electricity, enough to light 264,000 homes across the grid, said Millis.

"There is a big potential for power and we didn't want to be the ones competing for our own rights to develop our own project," Millis said. Revenue generated by the hydropower developments would be used to help offset the high ticket price for building the Lake Powell Pipeline project, he said.

Lin Alder, executive director of Citizens for Dixie's Future, said the state "optimistically" hopes that it can afford to build the Lake Powell Pipeline and develop the hydroelectric power.

"It would be exorbitantly expensive," said Alder. "We would have the smallest amount of population paying for the most expensive water project in the state. It's going to die under its own weight."

Millis concedes it will cost more than \$500 million to build the Lake Powell Pipeline Project, and even more to include the hydroelectric power stations. Power sales from the hydroelectric developments would create a revenue stream to help offset the cost of building the pipeline, he said.

"We are still working on the numbers, but hopefully we are close," Millis said. "It really is in our plans (the hydroelectric projects) and some of the cost is already included in that \$500 million."

But Alder said the process has been flawed from the start.

"The process by which this project has been proceeding has kept citizens in the dark," Alder said. "A lack of public dialogue is going to cause a backlash against the project."

Millis said it would take up to four years for the project to move through the environmental and regulatory process required by the federal government.

"There will be many opportunities for the public to comment," he added.

The hydropower projects include Little Creek Development for 18 megawatts; the Hurricane Cliffs Pumped Storage Development that would include two reservoirs and produce 415 megawatts; and the Sand Hollow Development, which would produce 10 megawatts.

If the preliminary permit is issued the state could begin work on an economic analysis, preparation of preliminary engineering plans and a study of environmental impacts.

Anyone seeking to intervene or compete for the right to develop the hydropower that could be produced from the Lake Powell Pipeline project must file a notice with Federal Energy Regulatory Commission by the end of the year.

More information about the project can be found online at water.utah.gov.

E-mail: nperkins@desnews.com

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